

whole surface, presented a singularly mottled appearance; and as the black colour became predominant, the white portions of the skin seemed like patches of irregular shape formed in the natural negro skin. With the colour of the skin, that of the hair, which had also become white, has been gradually restored to its former black hue. During this process of return to the natural colour the health has been remarkably good.

---

June 11, 1846.

The MARQUIS OF NORTHAMPTON, President, in the Chair.

“On the Physiology of the Human Voice.” By John Bishop, Esq., F.R.S.

After premising a brief description of the system of organs which are subservient to the voice, the author proceeds to consider the several theories which have been devised to account for its various modifications. These theories have, for the most part, been founded on the laws which regulate the vibratory movements of stretched membranous surfaces; and the investigation of those laws has accordingly occupied the attention of many eminent mathematicians, such as Euler, Bernoulli, Riccati, Biot, Poisson and Herschel; but it is a subject requiring the most profound analysis, and involving the resolution of problems of much greater complexity than the laws of the vibrations of either strings or bars. The assumptions which are necessary in order to bring the subject within the reach of analysis, namely, that the membrane is homogeneous in its substance, and of equal thickness and elasticity throughout its whole extent, are at variance with the actual conditions of the vocal organs, which are composed of tissues differing in thickness, density and elasticity, and of which the tension is indeterminate; circumstances which present insuperable obstacles to the attainment of a mathematical theory of their vibrations.

The author, after giving a critical account of the experiments made by Biot, Willis, Müller, Cagniard la Tour and De Kempelin on the vibrations of membranous laminae, examines the various actions of the vocal organs during the production of the more simple tones; and considers more especially the office of the vocal ligaments, in regulating the pitch of the voice, which he considers as resulting from variations in their length and tension conjointly. By applying to the chordæ vocales the formulæ of vibrating cords, he traces the influence which is exerted on their movements by the mucous membranes; and finds that they obey, to a certain extent, the laws of vibrating strings.

The analogy between the action of the glottis and that of a reed is next examined, and an opinion expressed that the movements of the glottis in the vocalization of the sound, partake of the nature of the reed, during the partial opening and shutting of the rima-glottidis.

The author next investigates the acoustic relations between the actions of the glottis and that of the vocal pipe, and the acoustic effects of flexible membranous tubes on a column of air vibrating within it, and finds that the structure of the trachea and of the soft parts above and below the larynx is adapted to vibrate synchronously with any note that may be formed in the larynx. The falsetto voice may be produced either by the partial closing of the glottis, or by a nodal division of the vocal chords; the pitch of the sound in the production of this peculiar modification of the voice, being such that the column of air in the vocal tube is of the precise length requisite to vibrate in unison with the larynx. The inquiry is further extended to the sources of the various tones of the voice in singing, such as the *bass*, *tenor*, *contralto*, and *soprano*; together with their subdivisions of *barytone*, *mezzo-soprano*, and *soprano-sfogato*; and to the places which they occupy in the musical scale. Independently of the falsetto, the compass of the natural voice rarely exceeds two octaves; although in some cases, as in those of Malibran and Catalani, it may extend even beyond three. The voice in singing is modulated by the contraction or relaxation of the velum, uvula and fauces. The author lastly adverts to the attempts that have, at various times, been made by the Abbé Mical, Faber, Kratzenstein, De Kempelin, Willis, Wheatstone and others, to imitate articulate sounds by mechanism.

Having thus examined the human voice as resulting from the vibration of membranous ligaments, in obedience, first, to the laws of musical strings; secondly, to those of reeded instruments; and thirdly, to those of membranous pipes; he arrives at the conclusion, that the vocal organs combine, in reality, the actions of each of these instruments, and exhibit in conjunction, the perfect type of every one of them.

---

June 18, 1846.

The MARQUIS OF NORTHAMPTON, President, in the Chair.

“The Electric Fluid.” By W. F. Stevenson, Esq., F.R.S.

The author denies the existence of two electric fluids, and maintains that all the phenomena are explicable on the hypothesis of a single fluid; which when present in a conducting body renders it positive, and in a non-conducting body, negative; but a body which is naturally a conductor, may, he asserts, be rendered otherwise, by changing its form.

“Observations of the Heights of the Thermometer and Barometer made at Lenham Lodge, near Maidstone, Kent, during the first nine days of the month of June 1846.” By George Hunsley Fielding, M.D., F.R.S.

On Sunday the 7th of June 1846, the thermometer in the shade rose to the extraordinary height of 94° Fahr., exceeding by one de-